

the turbulence in our Nation's mortgage industry. The fundamentals of America's economy remain strong, but the mortgage industry is going through a period of adjustment. And some Americans are worried about the impact this is having on their ability to make their monthly mortgage payments.

I have made it a priority to help American homeowners navigate these financial challenges so that as many families as possible can stay in their homes. The Federal Government will not bail out lenders because that would only make a recurrence of the problem more likely. And it is not the Government's job to bail out speculators or those who made the decision to buy a home they knew they could never afford. But I support action at the Federal level that will help more American families keep their homes.

One important way to help homeowners during this time of housing market stress is for Congress to change a key part of the Federal Tax Code. Under current law, when a lender forgives part of a mortgage to help its customer stay afloat, that amount is treated as taxable income. When your home is losing value and your family is under financial stress, the last thing you need is to be hit with higher taxes. So I'm working with members of both parties to pass a bill that will protect homeowners from having to pay taxes on canceled mortgage debt.

Another important step we're taking for American homeowners is to modernize the Federal Housing Administration. The FHA is a Government Agency that provides mortgage insurance to borrowers through a network of private sector lenders. I've sent Congress important legislation that would help more Americans qualify for this insurance by lowering downpayment requirements, increasing loan limits, and providing more flexibility in pricing. By passing this legislation, Congress will allow the FHA to reach more families in need of our assistance, and I ask Congress to act quickly.

At the same time, we will launch a new FHA initiative called FHASecure. This initiative will help some people who have good credit but have recently been missing their payments. FHASecure will help these families refinance their mortgages so they can make their payments and keep their homes.

There are other ways we can help. My administration will launch a new Foreclosure Avoidance Initiative to help homeowners learn more about their refinancing options. I've directed Secretary Paulson and Secretary Jackson to look into innovative ways to bring together homeowners and counseling groups, financial professionals, and the FHA and Government-sponsored enterprises like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to help American families find the mortgage product that works best for them.

Finally, the Federal Government is working to make the mortgage industry more transparent and more reliable and more fair so we can reduce the likelihood that homeowners will face similar problems in the future. Federal banking regulators are strengthening lending standards and making mortgages easier to understand. My administration is working on new rules to help our consumers compare and shop for loans that meet their budgets and needs. We are committed to pursuing fraud and wrongdoing in the mortgage industry.

Homeownership has always been part of the American Dream. During my administration, we've achieved record homeownership rates. We'll continue to work hard to keep our housing market strong, to ensure that American families can afford the homes they buy, and to help bring the dignity and security that comes with homeownership to more of our citizens.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11 a.m. on August 31 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 1. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 31 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Situation at the Crandall Canyon Mine in Huntington, Utah

September 1, 2007

Since August 6, Americans have followed the fate of six miners trapped in a Utah mine. We have prayed for their safety, asked God

to comfort their families, and witnessed the unwavering commitment of their community. Our hearts broke when three brave rescue workers gave their own lives in the search for the missing miners.

The people of the central Utah mining community have inspired us all with their incredible strength and courage in the face of tremendous loss. Last night, a difficult decision was made to end the search. Laura and I are deeply saddened by this tragedy and continue to pray for the families of these men.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Iraqi Leaders at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq

September 3, 2007

[The President's remarks are joined in progress.]

—as reinforcements. And together with the brave Iraqis, we've gone into Al Qaida strongholds and have driven them out.

Today, Anbar is a really different place. The level of violence is down; local governments are meeting again; police are more in control of the city streets; and normal life is returning. The people of this Province are seeing that standing up to the extremists is the path to a better life, that success is possible. And soon I'm going to meet with some of the leaders here in Anbar Province who have made a decision to reject violence and murder in return for moderation and peace.

I'm looking forward to hearing from the tribal leaders who led the fight against the terrorists and are now leading the effort to rebuild their communities. I'm going to speak with members of Anbar's Provincial council, which has reestablished itself and returned to the capital city of Ramadi. I'm going to reassure them that America does not abandon our friends, and America will not abandon the Iraqi people. That's the message all three of us bring.

Earlier, we just met with the leaders of Iraq's national Government: President Talabani and Prime Minister Maliki, Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih, Vice President Abd Al-Mahdi, Vice President Hashimi, and President Barzani of the Kurdish region. We

had a good, frank discussion. We share a common goal: a free Iraq that has a government that responds to the people. The Government they represent, of course, is based in Baghdad, but they're here in Anbar because they know the success of a free Iraq depends on the national Government's support from the bottom up. They know what I know, that when you have bottom-up reconciliation like you're seeing here in Anbar, it'll begin to translate into central Government action.

The national Government is sharing oil revenues with this Province, and that's a positive development. The challenges are great, and I understand the pace of progress is frustrating. It's frustrating for the American people; it's frustrating for the Iraqi people. These people are working under difficult circumstances after having lived under the thumb of a brutal tyrant. Iraq's local and national leaders are working to ensure that the military success in places like Anbar is quickly backed up by real improvements in the lives of ordinary Iraqis. That's what we discussed today. Secretary Gates, Secretary Rice, and I discussed with the Iraqi leaders that there has been some security success, and now it's important for government to follow up.

Our troops and diplomats and civilian experts will support the Iraqis in these efforts as they follow up. General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker gave us an update on how things are looking. They gave us an update on the way forward, and I was pleased with what I heard. The strategy we put into place earlier this year was designed to help the Iraqis improve their security so that political and economic progress could follow. And that is exactly the effect it is having in places like Anbar.

We can't take this progress for granted. Here in Anbar and across Iraq, Al Qaida and other enemies of freedom will continue to try to kill the innocent in order to impose their dark ideology. But General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker tell me if the kind of success we are now seeing continues, it will be possible to maintain the same level of security with fewer American forces. These two fine Americans will report to Congress next week, and I urge members of both